



# **Naxalism – A Distortion of Democratic Development**



RAJAJI INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS AND ADMINISTRATION  
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## Foreword

This is without doubt a most valuable study, and the work and analysis is of a high order. Naxalism is known in the United Kingdom, but is only a word to most of us. I am sure that the analysis of the causes of violence is correct, and with the decline in authority in nearly every country, violence has become superficially an easy remedy, appealing especially to a few of the young as a means of remedying their grievances. I also agree with the implicit conclusion in the document that those of us who are in politics must consistently adopt the highest standards of which we are capable and live up to our promises, although I am afraid that, being human, we shall always fall short. The poor, the victimised, those who are unjustly treated, will always turn to non-democratic methods if there is no means of outlet or opportunity to remedy their injustices by constitutional means.

London

Rt. Hon. Lord Callaghan  
Former Prime Minister of U.K.



# Message

I am happy to know that the Rajaji International Institute of Public Affairs and Administration is organising a Workshop on Naxalism with the participation of Political leaders, Jurists, Academicians, Administrators, Law Enforcement Authorities, Journalists and representatives of voluntary organisations. Naxalism which originated in Naxalbari, a group of 60 odd villages in the foot-hills of Himalayas in Darjeeling District of West Bengal in 1967 in the wake of an armed uprising against the establishment, has over the years spread to other parts of the country and has manipulated itself in different forms bringing in its wake killings and other forms of violence and untold sufferings to the people. All right thinking people will agree that we have to tackle this menace effectively before it spreads any further.

It is however to be recognised that the emergence of Naxalism was the direct result of lack of social and economic justice in different parts of the country. The most distinctive characteristic of this movement is that it is entrenched mainly among the most oppressed and exploited people and areas of the country. Viewing Naxalites as extremists and their struggle as a law and order issue may not be the correct approach to solve this problem. Nor will the Naxalite movement disappear with the mere enactment of progressive social and economic legislation or the launching of welfare programmes.

It has to be much more than that in fact, it should be tackled on the social, economic and political fronts with the cooperation and involvement of Governmental agencies and the different segments of the society, so that the root-cause namely, social and economic injustice prevalent in different parts of the country especially in certain backward rural and tribal areas are removed; and those who are actively involved in this movement are brought back to the mainstream of national life; and their energies utilised for the upliftment of the down-trodden and the oppressed through constructive programmes in a peaceful manner.



(C. Subramaniam)  
Chairman, RIIPAA

Bombay



# Preface

The Institute had convened a Workshop on Naxalism : A Distortion of Democratic Development on the 7th and 8th April, 1990, in order to develop an unified canvas of Naxalism emerging from the kaleidoscopic perceptions. An attempt was made to analyse the national response, and to suggest an action plan.

A group of 33 eminent citizens representing all shades of political opinion, law enforcement authorities, administrators, journalists, voluntary activists, rural/tribal youth, academicians and civil liberties - participated.

The method adopted was essentially interactive; no papers were presented. The discussion was aided by, but not confined to, a background paper, and several notes sent in advance by some of the participants.

A draft statement of the workshop was circulated among those participants who attended the Workshop on both the days for their comments and endorsement. This statement represents the agreed canvas reflecting diversity of perceptions, but not necessarily a consensus on all the facets of Naxalism.

The Workshop was inaugurated by H. E. Shri Krishan Kant, Governor of Andhra Pradesh.

Shri C. Subramaniam, Chairman of the Institute and Governor of Maharashtra sent a message expressing concern over the problem of Naxalism and suggesting that it should be tackled on the social, economic and political fronts.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Callaghan, Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom read the report with keen interest and wrote the foreword.

My colleague Dr. L.S.N. Murty, Associate Professor helped in finalising the report.

Shri V. Bhima Sankara Rao typed the script.

Hyderabad  
November, 1991.

G.R.S. Rao  
Director





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**Inaugural Address of  
Shri Krishan Kant, Governor of Andhra Pradesh  
at the Workshop on 7th April, 1990**

The Naxalism that we witness today does no credit to those who profess it as well as to those who are opposed to it and claim to be democrats. One may ask how is this?

The Naxalites have to ask themselves : Is the present process of Naxalism a practical model which translates revolutionary theory of Marxism - Leninism and Mao Tsetung thought to build a socialist Indian state when they are unable to make a distinction between revolutionary violence and criminal violence and when the latter is overtaking the former with increasing speed? Can their present and potential capacity for violence ever overtake the violent capacities of even a decrepit modern state?

As for the mainstream democrats claiming to be opposed to violence and Naxalism and believing in socialist or egalitarian society, they have to ask themselves if they have given adequate response to the restlessness in their souls at the prevalent injustice and oppression in the society? Is it not a fact that it is only when violence takes place, they wake up to the social reality? Otherwise they feel they can live with it? Is it not that they themselves have given legitimacy to small violence which they use for political and economic advantage and gaining social clout? Do they realise that political parties have been reduced to election symbol-gaining machines and are not vehicles of peaceful economic and social revolution? Do they realise that electoral political rhetoric and populism are no substitute for a hard-headed political process where the anger and frustration of the people are constant reminders to the political and administrative rulers and keep them sensitive to the changing needs and moods of an evolving society? Have they devised such a process?

If we limit ourselves to the proposition of the seminar that Naxalism is primarily dealing with the rural poor and rural restructuring, then let us see how the different political and social leaders or forces have dealt with the problem. Both have failed but continue to stick to their respective original ideological formulations. Both have reached a point where they need to explore their ideological formulations much more intensively. Some are honest enough to admit their dilemmas while others feel reluctant to accept their failure publicly, and in the process lose the opportunity to learn lessons from their experiences which would be valuable to them as well as to the society.

Louis Fischer, the noted American journalist, had asked Gandhiji one evening before his arrest in the 'Quit India Movement' on 9th August, 1942 as to what would be his priority when India became free? His unequivocal reply was that the land will belong to the tiller. Elaborating it, he had said that in spite of his sympathy for the landlords he would advise them to flee from the villages. He was against payment of compensation for acquisition of those lands by the tillers because it would be just robbing Peter to pay Paul. If the Mahatma were alive, handing over the land to the tiller in a non-violent manner would have been his first socio-economic programme to be implemented to build a new political structure for India. The social structure and economy of rural India would have been transformed with the new independent state being forced to lend it resources, skills and support in this endeavour. The tilling landlords would have continued to have their share of land. They would also share their abilities to manage and serve the village society in the spirit of trusteeship in the new atmosphere.

Mahatmaji's first Satyagrahi Acharya Vinoba Bhave tried to capture the spirit of his master when he launched the Bhoodan Movement. He wanted to redistribute the land in a non-violent manner. His has been a yeoman's contribution to bring in revolutionary content in restructuring rural society and its economic relationships through the instrument of non-violence. The Telangana armed struggle, after independence, evoked a sympathetic cord in the hearts of many patriots because it also took up the issue of land redistribution in the rural areas for the tiller of the soil. It could not achieve its objective because it had not realised the relative power of violence the state could muster to counter the violence of the peasant squads. Even after it failed, the Government let the distributed land remain with the new tillers. In spite of the use of violence, it did not degenerate into criminal violence.

This sympathy was evoked by Acharya Vinoba's movement. On hind sight, it may be said that the sympathy created for the non- violent revolution could not be mopped up and mobilised in 1957 and there about to restructure rural India. After creating the climate, as was being suggested, had Vinoba given the call for take over of lands non-violently in the villages and the state security forces not being used to suppress the non-violent exchange of proprietorship, the rural India would have been transformed. It is here Mahatmaji's political acumen would, perhaps, have played its critical role in harmonising ends and means and striking at a moment of critical explosion. The landlords and the state would have been left with no option but to peacefully accept and work out a new socio-economic relationship.

Naxalism grew after the failure of the Bhoodan movement to redistribute the land and restructuring the rural society in the non-violent revolutionary fervour generated by it. The old debate that the social and economic structures could not be changed without violence began to re-emerge. Dr. B C Roy the then Chief Minister of West Bengal did not want Acharya Vinoba Bhave to work in his state. Vinoba acquiesced with it and bypassed Bengal to go over to Orissa. If he had resisted it, perhaps, West Bengal would have become a battleground for non-violent rural revolution, and the shape of movement that later started from Naxalbari would have been different.

The growth of Naxalism and the decline of the euphoria for Bhoodan movement coincide. It is based on the Maoist Model of armed peasant struggle for revolution. It appealed to the idealism and revolutionary ardour of the young people.

The slogan of Vinoba's movement was

धन और धरती बट के रहेगी,  
भूखी जनता अब न सहेगी।

"Wealth and land shall be distributed  
The hungry will no longer tolerate it".

It had created enough ground for idealism and created a climate to bring to an end oppressive rural society in the country. But it failed to achieve the objective. The Marxist and Socialist sceptics tried to prove their point that change in the basic social structure can never take place peacefully through consent. The strategy of converting the massive public sympathy and opinion into a socio-economic avalanche having been frustrated by leadership itself, the doors were opened for bringing

back the logic that without armed struggle, basic change could not take place. A tempo of sympathy was again visible in the country to push forward the political independence towards economic and social freedom and equality. If the Communist movement as a whole had remained together after learning lessons of the abortive Telangana struggle and not got divided and subdivided because of various external and internal factors - perhaps a successful experiment of non-violent socialistic change could have been carried out on the Indian soil.

Some of the documents of the CPI (ML) movement convey a realisation that one of the fundamental reasons for the left movement for not having taken off as in China or elsewhere was because of the lack of proper understanding of Indian thought, philosophy, history and culture. The Marxists knew more of Marxism, Leninism, Stalinism, history of Russian and Chinese revolution and socialistic thought than about India and its cultural ethos. They could not become indigenous Marxists. According to them, after Sun-Yat-Sen, China could produce MAO, a leader deeply steeped in Chinese culture (similar to Lenin steeped in Russian culture); but India could not produce an indigenous Communist personality after the ground had been prepared for national revolution by Tilak and Lajpat Rai.

The slogans of dominant sections of Naxal movement were 'Chairman Mao is our Chairman', 'power comes out of the barrel of the gun', 'area-wise seizure of power', 'rural areas surrounding the cities', 'struggle not for land and for crops but for political power'. They aroused ideological emotions and a spirit of sacrifice but they suffered from the basic lacuna of not having realistically analysed the nature of the Indian State; the potential of the democratic political process, however, corrupt it might have been; the potential of gorilla squads or peasant armed warfare as against the violent might of the state. The Naxalite groups oscillated between the various formulations like that of occasional peasants' armed-struggle, continuous armed struggle raising people's consciousness by mass action on class basis, parliamentary process to be followed with armed struggle when the final seizure of power is to take place. The latest developments in Russia, Eastern Europe and even in China have reopened for a fresh debate on the role and place of violence and armed struggle to bring about revolution or transformation of society. It has put the dogmatists in the Naxal movement and elsewhere in a quandary. The old revolutionary verbiage does not give the answer.

On the other hand, social injustice, misery of the poor, and the downtrodden continue to look up ferociously for solution. The

mainstream politics has degenerated into sheer game of power and corruption. The administration is not responsive because of lack of determination and vision in the political leadership. The ideological zeal of the Naxalite movement is petering out as they are reaching a dead-end not knowing which direction they should move. The desire for quick revolution had pushed the confused leadership from the programme of armed struggle in rural areas to individual killings and head-hunting, upto the cities. I need not go into the details of what happened to the Left movement in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh. They broadly fall into the pattern outlined earlier. Being possessed by intense ideological sympathy for the have-nots, some of them keep close to the people; but being unable to have a perspective or world-view they are not able to find out the next step or stage of the revolutionary struggle. Mere zeal cannot be a substitute for consistent political, economic and social thought and strategy for social transformation. It dies out, gets fragmented, goes in the hands of anti-social mafia elements. These revolutionary groups continue to survive on the plea and platform of civil liberties and human rights as against state terrorism which strikes a sympathetic cord in the mind of society, but it is a short-term affair. Lack of ideological and programmatic clarity of the leadership loosens their grip over the followers. The adventurist elements increasingly penetrate into their ranks and try to do business to make money and gain social clout. This veneer of ideology having been torn out, they lose the sympathy of the people, which had already started eroding over a period of time. The very logic of violence has fragmented the groups. They kill each other as well as some of the well meaning people in society who have proved to be their shields in the public eye.

We are at such a stage in many parts of the country. When we are discussing Naxalism today, let us be clear that the questions of rural restructuring, which were raised when the movement originated, still remain unanswered. The leadership has no answer. There are some small motivated groups whose spirit of service and identification with the masses continue to be respected. That is because of the moral and ethical approach of individuals and groups but not because of the appeal of a well understood and properly worked-out ideology and plan which can carry the masses with them in any state as a whole, much less the country.

The situation both in politics and Naxalism has degenerated. Adventurism, adhocism and selfishness dominate. Quick revolution through armed struggle and getting into power, and becoming rich by any means are the hall-marks of today's reckoning. It is the common masses who continue to be grinded into poverty and destitution. Both



talk of fighting against social, political and economic injustice; but both become instruments of thrusting injustice on society.

We have reached a situation where what Gandhiji wanted to do as a priority socio-economic programme in India is not possible because today there is not even one leader having mass appeal, who can arouse the people for sacrifice while there is a need for a dozen Mahatmas. The battle for economic and social freedom is more complex and difficult than the struggle for freedom from the foreign yoke. The left movement is divided while the Naxalite movement is fragmented and is unable to project an integrated world-view to enthuse the Indian people as a whole. The latest developments in the socialist world are shaking even deeply held ideologies and their application to the third-world countries. It is no more a polarised world between socialism and imperialism. It is becoming an interdependent world where market economies are being termed radical concepts by the acknowledged Marxist leaders for uplifting economies in the socialist world. The need to build a non-violent world is challenging the ingenuity of thoughtful persons all over the globe to devise strategies for peaceful methods of transforming different underdeveloped and developing nations into modern states. All orthodox dogmas - capitalist and socialist - have failed to answer the historical demand for change.

India and the world are not going to remain static. They are going to evolve a process of change even if the present leadership of the mainstream political parties taking part in the parliamentary process or of those who call themselves radical are unable to raise themselves to the challenges. The issue is how far they can measure themselves to the realities of the present situation, how much capacity they have to unlearn and relearn? The seeds of future lie in the womb of the present. Those seeds lie scattered all over the country and in all walks of life. There are sensitive leaders in all political parties, in the administration, among the academics and teachers, journalists doctors and lawyers, the peasant and labour leaders. The need is to shake up mental lethargies, self-interest, egoism and fear.

आईने जौं से डरना, तरजा-कुहम पे अड़ना,  
मंजिल यही कठिन है, कौमों की जिंदगी में॥

Fear of the new and clinging to the old  
That is the critical moment in a nations' life.

If we are genuine and realistic, all of us will realise that neither a massive armed struggle is possible, nor a series of continuous adhoc

class-struggles of different interest groups, inspire sympathy among general masses of people whatever may be the articulation of the leaders or their slogans.

Democratic process in an open society, howsoever those calling themselves radical may deride it, is the strongest bulwark against instability and spread of violent forces. Though the working of the present democratic process itself is generating violent and disintegrating forces, the strategy to fight them also lies through changing the rules of the game of the democratic process itself, through involvement of the people in non-violent manner. Those who still adhere to the doctrine of violent method of armed struggle must see the writing on the wall. They will be beaten by the stronger force of what they call even 'the tottering state and economy' in the long run. Otherwise they will be sidelined or thrown out of the ring by the sheer adventurists and mafia forces which have started acquiring strength and legitimacy by aligning with them. All concerned citizens must honestly discuss the lessons we have learnt from our experiences and join together to devise a political process which can lead the society to find an answer by operating the process.

The modification has to be brought in the process of power - that is the electoral process. It is not a case of fringe electoral reforms. It has to be a complete shake-up of the electoral process which has an inbuilt mechanism to express the anger, frustration and alienation of the people against the system as well as the political actors in all the political parties. What has been done in history by the gun and armed violence has to be achieved by the design of an innovative provision in the electoral process of what may be called people's right to reject all parties and all candidates - who they feel have betrayed them. The revolutionary programme and slogan has to be to grant the people the right to reject or to negate through the ballot the political leadership, political parties and even the independent candidates who have failed them. The inherent right of the people to reject all has to be given a statutory shape. There has to be another provision that a candidate to be successful will have to obtain majority of votes polled in the elections for Assembly or Parliament. This will give representative character to the elector, as well as initiate uniting processes in society instead of the present divisive ones. The present, *first past the post*, electoral process, where a candidate getting the largest number of votes, even in minority, can win; promotes divisive forces of casteism, communalism and factionalism of society along with other evils of muscle and money power to capture power by any means.

The combination of the revolutionary processes of rejection or negative voting plus the need to get majority of votes will initiate political processes which will lead to changing the character of politics. The expression of anger and disillusionment will not require a gun for shedding of blood but a negative vote against all those who have betrayed the people and want to get into power by using all possible means, including evil means, destructive of polity and society. The criminalisation of politics is a result where criminals are becoming politicians. This is not limited to the mainstream political parties and politicians. The criminalisation has taken place in the ideologically oriented armed squads who have not been able to clarify where the limits of revolutionary violence end, at what stage they become adventurers and where they turn into criminal gangs. It is time for genuine Naxalites to sit down and ponder. The same self-introspecting ones can join hands with all sensitive souls in all political parties, administration, academics etc., in all walks of life. They all can join together to influence the establishment to grant the right of Negative or Rejection Vote. The very process of mobilisation to get the Negative Vote will influence the administration and the political leadership to become responsive to the demands of justice and fairplay on behalf of the rural poor, tribals, landless labourers, the destitute and neglected sections of society.

The demand and later exercise of Negative or Rejection Vote will generate a moral and ethical movement which will transform the climate of the polity. The continuous exercise of these votes periodically would create a moral force in the society and mature it where people will not have to search and wait for a Gandhi or Jayaprakash to lead them. A continuous debate will start between the political leadership and the people on the one side and various interest- groups on the other which try to influence and dominate the system through the electoral process of power. This continuous debate will be a permanent 'glasnost' where rigid positions of the right or the left dogmatism will melt. Minds will have to be kept open to all experiences which will be knocking them because all minds will be actively generating waves for reaching a new equilibrium in society. Then violence and Naxalism will not be required to draw attention to injustice in society. The society will be continuously rising to new levels of consciousness and geared to the next stage of social, economic, political and moral growth and would be hastening towards development without violence.

It will create an atmosphere where the political and administrative forces in the state of Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere will get encouragement to solve the problem of the tribals arising from various factors such as land, exploitation and corruption. The moral and ethical

power of the people will be allies of such forces. That is why I am not going into the details of what is happening in Andhra or anywhere else at political, administrative and law and order levels and how it should be tackled at the micro level. These details can be worked out in the pattern for broad approach. All the genuine forces must feel heartened to get together. It will generate new enthusiasm in the political, administrative and social forces at all levels. The micro operation at the village, mandal and district level will be strengthened and get fresh energy.

I have attempted to give the parameters in which I see the issues of Naxalism. All established ideological approaches are giving way. It has opened uncharted seas for humanity which no doubt initially create fear and insecurity in the established modes of thoughts and contours of behaviour. There is nothing to despair because history of civilisations have shown that it is at such junctures the genius of the people finds new answers. I am confident that the Indian experience, with the background of ancient civilisation, may become the path-finder.



# Naxalism : Emerging Issues

– G.R.S. Rao\*

This note does not attempt an indepth analysis encompassing the whole range of issues, but seeks to provide an approach towards an appreciation of the problems of tribal-rural poor as a necessary pre-condition for the formulation of adequate and appropriate policy framework, programmes of development and implementation strategies. Such an approach to a holistic appreciation of 'Naxalism' involves (a) developing a unified canvas emerging from the kaleidoscopic perceptions of the problem, (b) taking cognizance of emerging issues, and (c) attuning the diverse approaches into an integrated action in tune with the canons of a welfare state. The primacy of focus in this note is on the tribal segment of the rural poor labelled in popular parlance as the problem of Naxalism.

Naxalism has grown so complex over the past quarter of a century that now it has come to mean different things to different people. A number of 'administrative conferences' (centre-state, inter-state and intra-state), 'academic seminars', committee reports and doctoral dissertations have only added to the complexity. Any attempt at an appreciation of the problem is compounded by the superimposition of dialectic and semantic complexities on the one hand, and overlaps between tribal and rural poor on the other. The situation resembles the story of the elephant and seven blind men, with one difference in that in the case of description of Naxalism, the seven did not know each others'

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language. In substance, Naxalism is a distortion of democratic development.

## **Conspectus –**

### **Naxalism and the Tribal Poor : Labels and Substance**

We cannot pin down the discussion to a specific frame of time and space. A historical problem of poverty was given the label of 'Naxalism' in West Bengal during 1967. The 'label' was affixed to the problems (having similarities as well as dissimilarities), obtaining in other areas (Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh), eliciting differential perceptions and public policy responses. The epicentre of the problem so labelled has been shifting, as also its valence from time to time. To add to the complexity, the 'problem' appears to be reflecting different shades, like in a rainbow, at different layers of the society. The 'intellectual' seeks to explain Naxalism in metaphysical terms as a class-struggle (some of them lifting it to the level of international perspective), many politicians project it as a part of the process of politicization, the administrators reduce it to a law-and-order problem, the academics debate it as a social movement, the 'social-workers' seek to analyse it as a problem of exploitation and 'backwardness'. Perhaps the involved people at the ground level experience it as a problem emerging from their ignorance, poverty, disease, isolation, but either gradually or abruptly being exposed to 'outside' people with different models of 'complex' life-styles, values (acquisitive, competitive etc.) and attitudes (of cultural aggression). An island of helplessness in an ocean of collaborative exploitation. Over a period of time, a sense of deprivation, subjugation and social disruption have led to resistance, aggressive response and revolt, waging a losing battle, thanks to superior 'strength' of non-tribals, often ably supported by the development, administrators, law enforcing authorities, judicial institutions, partisan politicians, 'resourceful' contractors, all of which go to make the modern history of tribals in India.

Two factors (emerging from contemporary history of India) assume critical significance. The tribal territory stretching from south Bihar to north Andhra Pradesh (encompassing parts of Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) is not only contiguous geographically, but also homogeneous in its socio-economic and cultural characteristics. The history of this Homogeneous Tribal Society is characterized by its struggle against exploitation and oppression by the non-tribal section of the population and organs of state, both pre-and-post Independence period. The reorganization of states during the 1950s could be justified

on many a ground, but not from the stand-point of respecting the homogeneity of the tribal language, life and culture. The reorganization had perhaps contributed to fragmentation of public policy formulated and pursued by the five states in regard to tribal development, as also the fragmentation of the tribal communities as an ethnic group within each of the States. The emergence of Jharkhand party demanding a separate state for the tribals represents the growing consciousness and organization of tribal population.

That Naxalism as a problem if not as a process has been found to be co-terminous with the territory of this tribal society cannot be lost sight of. The tribal society was not in need of, perhaps, this new label i.e. Naxalism. The tribals are not naxals. They have their own more acceptable label viz., the 'tribal'.

## **Social Disruption Through Development**

### **Tribals at cross-roads**

Feudalism that was prevailing all over the tribal country, in its agrarian, social and ethnocentric manifestations was 'accepted' by the tribals with a sense of resignation because of the 'equilibrium' obtaining under static conditions. That static condition was disturbed with the process of change initiated through what has been called development.

Location of development projects - industrial or irrigation - and the influx of non-tribals created a demographic imbalance as also a syndicate of 'exploiters' - money lenders, contractors and employment seekers, including 'casual labour' brought in by contractors, ultimately leading to a loss of cultural identity of the tribals, accompanied by a sense of frustration. Pre-existing feudalistic exploitation 'developed' into collaborative exploitation.

The political processes proved inadequate and inappropriate in responding to the emerging tribal problems in their transition from feudal situation to bureaucratized development. The administrative processes were more than irresponsible; devoid of commitment to the cause of tribal development, officials, especially at the cutting-edge level, became hostile towards the tribals. This antagonism is best illustrated by the administrators in their reference, to the tribals as the 'sons-in-law' of the government. The partisan disposition of the administrators in dealing with the problems between tribals and non-tribals on the one hand, and the inaccessibility of the officials to the tribals on the other, were reflected by the tribals in their reference to the administrators as the 'sons-in-law' of the government.



Even as the grievances of the tribal population against the non-tribals were swelling - ranging from demand for foul, unfair price for the forest produce, to violation of modesty of tribal women - there appeared to be no effective mechanism or process for the redressal of grievances of the tribals, which could have, even ineffectively, worked as a safety valve to an explosive situation. When the administrators themselves were the cause of the grievances of tribals, where can they go with their grievances ?

The policy of development of backward areas was reduced, at best, to the development of geographical areas, by the location of industries with state aided finances (and a variety of incentives), whereas the people in the backward areas (the 'backward people') were left behind. They were not allowed even to stay where they were, in the process and the pace of development. One would wish they were left behind, in their pre-existing state of 'equilibrium', a condition accepted as fate.

### **Agents of change or disruption?**

Administrators in India since independence, who have been assigned the task of agents of change, have not adequately appreciated their changed role, much less equipped and attuned themselves to perform the role assigned by the society and the Constitution. They have not merely sustained the distance obtaining between administration and the citizen; it is reinforced by an ever-increasing degrees of alienation and mutual antagonism. Administrators (and especially police force) who have been assigned through a plethora of welfare legislation, the task of promoting social justice, have accentuated feudalistic class conflict by aligning themselves with the upper class, distorting administrative neutrality. A recent survey revealed that the image of police as perceived by themselves is much lower than the image of police as projected by the citizens.

While seeking to perform the role of a professional force, the para-military functionaries were not even fully aware of the dimensions of the problem of Naxalism or the public policy in that regard. When the policy objectives were not clear, it is not surprising that the actions of the internal security forces resulted in hundreds of (perhaps more) casualties not only among the Naxals and their sympathizers but also innocent citizens and police themselves. These figures get multiplied when one takes into account the widely publicized encounter deaths. Decades, if not centuries of exploitation of the tribals by the feudalistic elements did not prick the conscience of the administration. But after

India became a welfare state, the police are aggressive in intervening on behalf of the exploitative sections of society, with an ever increasing range and strength of fire power. The long delayed response from the weak is given the label of Naxalism.

## **Two alternative interventions**

No society, no social group, much less the polyglot Indian society, operates with a universal ethos - some percentage always thinks and acts differently. There were two such distinct groups among the non-tribals who intervened. Not that the tribals asked for help - they did not reach that level and stage of social and political organization. The social workers who went out to aid and assist the tribals adopted the philosophy that conscientization of tribals through promotion of social awareness, political organization, and economic amelioration facilitates their full-fledged citizenization. An evolutionary- model. The other group adopted a philosophy, NAXALISM in short, emphasizing that the only way of meeting 'exploitation' is by revolt and armed struggle.

It is not that the tribals have fully understood the choice before them, and the implications of the alternatives. They are dazed, not knowing where they are; they are at the cross-roads.

## **Naxalism : A movement without momentum?**

Several factors characterize the ideation, action, orientation, growth and present status of Naxalism in India today. Though its origin was influenced by the avowed objective of bringing about revolutionary change, with emphasis more on the methods, the growth and status of Naxalism has been conditioned more by the changes that have taken place in the Indian polity, especially within the tribal communities, in the name of development. Naxalism as a movement raised its head in areas where public policy responses have not been adequate and appropriate.

The problem of Naxalism was compounded by the internal contradictions, not based on any conflict in objectives but emerging from factors such as caste, leadership, style and strategy. The fragmentation of naxalite movement was not of any advantage either to the state or to the tribal community.

The distortions in development have certainly proved to be a fertile ground for Naxalism. But the movement itself started with what may be called a variety of genetic problems. In ideological terms political process lent a leftist ethos to naxalite movement. Though it has been credited with support and help from across national boundaries, it has not grown

Even as the grievances of the tribal population against the non-tribals were swelling - ranging from demand for foul, unfair price for the forest produce, to violation of modesty of tribal women - there appeared to be no effective mechanism or process for the redressal of grievances of the tribals, which could have, even ineffectively, worked as a safety valve to an explosive situation. When the administrators themselves were the cause of the grievances of tribals, where can they go with their grievances ?

The policy of development of backward areas was reduced, at best, to the development of geographical areas, by the location of industries with state aided finances (and a variety of incentives), whereas the people in the backward areas (the 'backward people') were left behind. They were not allowed even to stay where they were, in the process and the pace of development. One would wish they were left behind, in their pre-existing state of 'equilibrium', a condition accepted as fate.

### **Agents of change or disruption?**

Administrators in India since independence, who have been assigned the task of agents of change, have not adequately appreciated their changed role, much less equipped and attuned themselves to perform the role assigned by the society and the Constitution. They have not merely sustained the distance obtaining between administration and the citizen; it is reinforced by an ever-increasing degrees of alienation and mutual antagonism. Administrators (and especially police force) who have been assigned through a plethora of welfare legislation, the task of promoting social justice, have accentuated feudalistic class conflict by aligning themselves with the upper class, distorting administrative neutrality. A recent survey revealed that the image of police as perceived by themselves is much lower than the image of police as projected by the citizens.

While seeking to perform the role of a professional force, the para-military functionaries were not even fully aware of the dimensions of the problem of Naxalism or the public policy in that regard. When the policy objectives were not clear, it is not surprising that the actions of the internal security forces resulted in hundreds of (perhaps more) casualties not only among the Naxals and their sympathizers but also innocent citizens and police themselves. These figures get multiplied when one takes into account the widely publicized encounter deaths. Decades, if not centuries of exploitation of the tribals by the feudalistic elements did not prick the conscience of the administration. But after

India became a welfare state, the police are aggressive in intervening on behalf of the exploitative sections of society, with an ever increasing range and strength of fire power. The long delayed response from the weak is given the label of Naxalism.

## **Two alternative interventions**

No society, no social group, much less the polyglot Indian society, operates with a universal ethos - some percentage always thinks and acts differently. There were two such distinct groups among the non-tribals who intervened. Not that the tribals asked for help - they did not reach that level and stage of social and political organization. The social workers who went out to aid and assist the tribals adopted the philosophy that conscientization of tribals through promotion of social awareness, political organization, and economic amelioration facilitates their full-fledged citizenization. An evolutionary- model. The other group adopted a philosophy, NAXALISM in short, emphasizing that the only way of meeting 'exploitation' is by revolt and armed struggle.

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in a manner that it could help correct distortions of development faced by tribal communities. Consequently the friction between the state and Naxals is increasing, diversified by factionalization of the movement.

## **Wither Welfare State – Groping in Day-light**

### **The Vision**

The first Prime Minister of independent India reflected upon the tribal situation and three distinct options with regard to its tribal population. The three options were : (a) leave the tribals alone, and allow them to continue to live in relative isolation untouched by modern civilization and the process of socio-economic change; (b) bring them into the mainstream of national development and integrate them, socially, economically, politically and culturally a merger without leaving any distinctive identity; and (c) protect and promote the essence and best of their traditions and culture, even as they are provided the benefits of modern science, medicine, education as a part of the process of development. Nehru had strongly projected the third as the best alternative, that meshed with the vision of India, the Preamble, the Directive Principles, the Fundamental Rights and various other policy perspectives adumbrated in the various policy statements.

Apart from articulating the canons of a Democratic Republic as applicable to all citizens - egalitarianism, universal adult franchise, etc., we had evolved specific policy measures such as "protective discrimination" in order to provide a fillip to the weak and the disadvantaged so that they do not lag behind, for all times. Even the process of socio-economic development was designed, in explicit terms, to minimise regional imbalances and to promote accelerated development of people lagging behind in socio-economic terms.

We had gone further in providing for special tribal components (Integrated Tribal Development Plan) in our design for planned social change, created special instrumentalities like the Commissioner for Scheduled Tribes, (to oversee and monitor the process and impact of development), the Girijan Development Cooperative Corporation, and the like in order to eliminate 'middlemen', and, to provide a thrust in translating policy into reality.

### **Distortions in Policy Process**

Complex social problems call for matching (adequate and appropriate) responses, often a judicious mix of socio-economic-psychological components evolved through public debate and political process of problem identification, definition and consensus, within the

framework of an ideology summed up in the Indian context by the expression 'Welfare State'. Distortions in the policy process could lead to a mis-match between the problem and policy, leading to a decisive but negative impact on its efficacy, ultimately resulting in aggravating and complicating the problem sought to be resolved. Naxalism glaringly illustrates the point, a case of distortions in policy process.

The problems of tribals have been seen for long years by the various political parties as a problem of Naxalism ever since that label got fixed to the gut issues of 'development' of the community. The problem was subjected to an approach, from the stand-point of partisan politics, but not a holistic analysis. The process was distorted as different political parties approached it as an issue to beat the party in power with instead of perceiving it as a 'national' problem demanding consensus process, and a developmental perspective in consonance with social welfare and democratic ethic.

When the partisan policies did not yield the desired or desirable results but led to unintended consequences, violence being its most visible manifestation, policies were evolved to treat the symptom as one of 'law and order'. Responsibility for the management of the problem was passed on to the 'Law and Order' administration - which not merely 'accepted' the primary responsibility for its management, but reinforced it as nothing more than a 'law and order' problem. The professional task and responsibility of analysis and redefinition of the problem and the policy perspectives, if found necessary, appropriateness and adequacy of the police organization to manage the problem were neither debated within the police, nor articulated before the executive and the legislature. In other words, policies formulated by the political executive were 'accepted' as 'given' by the professional administration; their own contribution to the analysis of the problem and policy formulation was nearly absent.

Having accepted the ill-defined problem and inadequate policy frame, the law and order machinery chased the problem. Demanding and securing additional powers, more stringent laws, frequent use of preventive detention, special courts for summary trials, stiff punishment for possessing arms, opening up new police stations and outposts, provision of sophisticated arms, increased mobility and communication (paradoxically, not with the affected community), induction of paramilitary force such as grey hounds to strengthen local police, special policing in sensitive areas, coordination among different security forces through institutional arrangements resulted in the growth in numbers not only of police but different police organizations/units, (aggravating problems of

coordination) with a solution to the problem nowhere in sight. Further demands such as issue of identity cards to the residents only confirm the conversion of tribal development into a law and order problem - a police problem.

It is no more the tribals alone but we the citizens, the government and the police organizations find ourselves at cross-roads due to the distortions in policy and its process. Which way should we turn to reach the welfare State? We seem to find ourselves groping in day-light.

## **Policy Options**

### **Harmony and Development *versus* Strife and Disruption**

The irony of socio-economic development in India is that we are rich in intellect but do not seem to take note of and learn even from our many a success story.

West Bengal, the birth place of 'Naxalism', (in its incarnation of 1960s) evolved a policy, inter alia, of inducting all (relevant) departments of Government and more significantly voluntary organizations to provide succour to the people. Families of 'Naxals' were rehabilitated. Elsewhere in the country voluntary organizations were perceived as antagonistic to the State administration, and were dubbed as Naxalite front organizations, or agents of the C.I.A.

Equally interesting to note was that the police and paramilitary forces posted in some areas did not have even an idea of Naxalism. In some areas/states, Naxalism subsided, but police 'posts' continue. When some senior police officers criticized 'third-degree' methods, there was an uproar among the police themselves, against such open criticism, as it would lead to 'demoralization' of the force.

Public Policy Process is too complex to be left to any single organ of State, or institution or a group in society. Policing and Naxalism are too complex and critical to be left to the police. Society has to participate in shaping the policy, in its implementation, in ensuring its compliance, and in monitoring its impact - intended as well as unintended.

Political process (involving all political parties) has a positive, critical and benevolent role. It is a vital pre-requisite for promoting harmony and development, and in arresting strife and disruption.

We the people of India - that section which considers itself as 'developed' presume, rather presumptuously, that the tribals are undeveloped (almost equate the two expressions). Can we imagine for

a moment that the perception of tribals about themselves and of the non-tribals could be at variance with the definition or meaning we give to the expressions of 'development', 'Naxalism' and 'Tribals'?

We the People who have attained the status of citizenship, breathing the invigorating air of 'modernization' are tending to grow insensitive to the ethos and cultural traits of our 'half-citizen', the tribals. Even by our own standards and norms, the so called 'backward' 'tribals' might justifiably call us 'barbaric'.

Let us formulate policies that mesh with our democratic ethic (resurging the world over), the vision of founding fathers of our nation, the Preamble and the Directive Principles towards the citizenization of the tribals, as clearly envisioned by Nehru in terms of preserving (as they perceive) the best of tribal culture, and delivering them the benefits of modern civilization, through a sensitive process of socio-legal engineering. Is that not what the Naxals have been asking for? Let us pause and ponder, collectively through a process of creative interaction.





# Statement of the Workshop

## **Naxalism : Ground Realities**

### **Political Process :**

Naxalism is a multi-dimensional problem - political, economic, social and cultural. Naxalism reflects not only the prevalent injustice and oppression in society, but also the conflict between values of democratic change and status quo.

Mainstream politics has degenerated into sheer game of power and corruption. Characterised by fragmentation, populism and pursuit of power, political parties did not bother to minimise the disparities between the rich and poor, inequality between the tribal and the non-tribal, and deprivation of the poor. The system is getting so bad that if basic problems are not solved through the political process, 'Naxalism' will grow.

Democrats claiming to be opposed to violence and believing in socialist or egalitarian society, have to ask themselves if they have given adequate response to the restlessness in their souls at the prevalent injustice and oppression in the society. It is only when violence takes place they wake up to the social reality.

If our constitutional process is blocked, it will overflow. Political parties have not made a sincere attempt to present themselves before the rural-tribal poor as a better alternative to Naxals in solving their problems.

As the political parties have shifted their focus from the society to political power, the electoral process itself is at stake. Political cadres have become 'Pairavikars' (contact men); politicians are concentrating their energy on tenders, contracts, transfers and promotions. There is a political vacuum at the grass-root level, Naxals are the only political 'Cadres'.

Naxalism has emerged as a result of distortions in the democratic process. If democracy supports and sustains status quo, Naxalism is bound to grow. Naxalism is a symptom of the degeneration of mainstream politics. As a result of degeneration of politics, the state is finding itself at the wrong end of the gun.

'Naxalism' had always emerged at a time of national crisis, in the form of a conflict between democratic system versus status quo. Democratic process should provide for defending the system and for fighting everything that might damage the nation. Democracy cannot fight barbarism through barbaric methods.

Once violence is initiated and set in motion; even the Naxalite leaders may not be able to stop it. Violence itself is politicized, subjected to partisan politics, and converted into class-conflict.

Youth rebel, but not without a cause. This rebellious attitude goes beyond the tribal and the rural, it is universal. If their cause does not find a solution, it bursts out in the form of violence, striking at the democratic process.

Where the aggrieved cannot influence the State, they try to capture the State. While Naxalism is perceived by some as nothing more than, and short of capture of political power through armed struggle, tribals are reduced to cogs in the Naxalite machine, others maintain that it is Naxalism but not its causal factors that is bothering the police, who are aligned with the haves.

### **Tribal-Rural dimension**

Naxalism is not coterminous with the tribal-rural problems of poverty and development. But the injustice<sup>(1)</sup> that the tribals experience within the framework of law is a factor contributing to Naxalism.<sup>1</sup>

The social system (comprising the politicians, contractors, administrators and the non-tribals), itself is proving exploitative of tribals,<sup>2</sup> who tend to identify themselves increasingly with the Naxals, as the latter are both sympathetic and responsive to the problems of tribals.

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1 Eg. where the tribals demand action against rape the response is suspension or transfer of the involved protectors of law; the tribal MLAs are also not accessible to the aggrieved tribals.

2 Eg. Corrupt contractors and officials impose a non-existing penalty of Rs.25/- for grazing by goats in forest areas.

Educated tribals who expose and oppose corrupt practices and collect data on the problems of corruption in order to represent to the senior officers are seen as impediments by the corrupt, and harassed by foisting false cases or threats or actual arrests under draconian law (TADA). Tribal alienation from the administration, and their identification with Naxals get accelerated. Naxalism though about 25 years old, encompasses not only the political, economic and social but also the cultural life of the tribals.<sup>3</sup> Tribal youth value education,<sup>4</sup> and strength of organization; result is the formation of Gondwana Sangharsha Samiti.

### **Distortions of Development**

The Area Development Plans, and location of industries in backward areas with state funded subsidies and incentives may have benefited the agriculturists and industrialists, but not the tribal, rural poor in backward areas. Indeed the quality of life of the backward communities was disrupted, for they were not integrated into the process of development. End result is alienation between the rural-tribal poor and the immigrant urban oriented non-tribal population.

Development that has taken place has not even left the tribal-rural poor untouched, but has exposed them to social and economic injustice. The nexus between Naxalism and maldevelopment has been influenced by the erosion of democratic values and institutions. For the poor who became poorer, Naxalism does not represent any ideology but a struggle for livelihood.

Problem of land reforms, exploitation of tribals, denial of distributive justice, costly access to the courts of justice and their limitations and inability to meet the growing problems of injustice, and increasing awareness of the rights on the one hand and growing disparities on the other, are at the base of Naxalism.

The educated unemployed tribals who fail to get into the mainstream of society, and exposed to the distortions of development are drawn into the whirlpool of Naxalism.

As significant as the problems of development skirting the tribals, are the processes of counter-development and its impact on the community. Abrupt exposure of tribals to cash economy (high-wage

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3. Referring to organization of dances by tribals for the benefit of VIPs, the tribal youth question whether the non-tribals celebrate Dusserah on any day of their choice.
  4. Educated tribals are offered a chair by the officials, even if grudgingly.

jobs, huge cash compensation for the lands acquired for 'developmental' projects without occupational rehabilitation, etc.), is also resulting in problems of counter-development such as increasing divorce rate and second marriages, and a shift from traditional (mahua) based domestic brew to contractor owned liquor shops.

Corruption as a concomitant of development has become all pervasive.<sup>5</sup> Corruption in the school and college hostels has made them the breeding ground of dedicated Naxals. In the face of the non-responsive and partisan administrative apparatus,<sup>6</sup> Naxals are seen by tribals as a group that can arrest their exploitation, deliver justice faster and at their door-step. Where regular courts have faded away, people's courts are springing up, making Naxalism not merely popular but also mass-based (as reflected in the massive attendance and participation at the rallies).

Emergence of Naxalism was the direct result of lack of social and economic justice in different parts of the country. The most distinctive characteristic of this movement is that it is entrenched mainly among the most oppressed and exploited people and areas of the country. Naxalism grew after the failure of the Bhoodan movement to redistribute the land and restructuring the rural society in a non-violent revolutionary fervour generated by it. However, there was a difference of opinion on the nexus between the failure of Bhoodan movement and the birth of Naxalism.

### **Civil Liberties and Law and Order Process**

There is a diversity in the perceptions, near polarization, in regard to civil liberties, Naxalite violence and administration of law and order.

On the one hand it is opined that Naxals while availing all democratic rights and liberties, destroy the very democracy that provides them the rights. They carry illegal, unauthorized and sophisticated fire-arms using them to kill the police. In such a situation, like in a war, there is no scope for civil liberties, and in dealing with Naxals civilian

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5. Tribals are arrested when they carry head-load of dry fuel wood; fined for their cattle grazing in forest lands; their 'Kalpa-Vriksha Mahua' is felled by forest department who promote plantation that doesn't fit into tribal custom or use; and hundreds of acres of forest is felled for paper mills.
  6. An industrialist can knock the door of the supreme court, and make it sit on a Sunday morning, the lesser citizens have to languish as undertrials. A poor man's wife can be had in exchange of a bundle of beedies or under the threat of 'action', a report documents.

population may have to suffer curtailment of civil liberties, and even casualties. At the other end of the spectrum are the perceptions that cold-blooded murders by the police are labelled as encounter- deaths, civil liberties are denied not only to Naxals but even to non-Naxals in Naxalite areas, imprisonment without trial and that A.P. police are famous for lock-up and encounter deaths.

Kidnapping, holding persons for ransom, intimidating law enforcing officials and judiciary can be resorted to by the professional criminals as much as revolutionary political activists. At some level, and at some stage, the distinction between the two may get blurred and 'crime' can easily acquire political hue. Once this happens, the deterioration in law and order will be a threat to the proper functioning of civil society. Once state force is unleashed it is on a war footing; political problems are passed on to police. In the spiralling violence, state finds itself at the wrong end of the gun.

There is another view, somewhere between the two ends of the spectrum. During the seventies and the eighties the cult of violence gained more and more respectability and recognition.<sup>7</sup> Masses now seem to be convinced that unless they resort to violence their problems will not be solved. They fear police but have no respect for them. They have no faith in the judiciary. Politicians as a class are considered power-hungry. Even the elected representatives are looked at with mistrust.

Police are not equipped to fight guerrillas, armed with AK 47s and other sophisticated weapons. They have no idea of the political convictions and operational strategies of the extremists. While Naxalites are popular among the poorer sections of the rural society, police suffer from an impaired and damaged image of themselves. Police find it easier to bump off known Naxals with criminal record than to prove the charges in the court. In the game of life and death between police and Naxals the loss is always heavier on the side of the latter. Police over-reaction with all their might, alignment with the haves, taking the frustrations of their service upon the citizens, and the bad elements bringing disrepute to the entire police force are another set of contributory factors.

The grievances of citizens are that even though they operate within the boundaries of law, they are stamped as Naxals; carrying a match-box

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7. Films with the themes of vengeance and violence have down-graded the image of police, the judiciary and the politicians.

is enough to attract arrest and imprisonment, any protest against police action results in invoking the provisions of Terrorist Activity & Disruption Act (TADA) as a matter of government policy.

### **Naxalism a movement ?**

Perceptions widely vary as to the geographical spread and growth of Naxalism as a movement. Inter-State variations in the recognition of tribal groups as SC, ST and non-SC, ST are resulting in migration across state borders, and tensions among the affected groups. Due to repression by police, there have been geographical shifts of Naxals. There is also a considerable turnover among the Naxal cadres due to police repression; police have a staying power in their action against Naxals. Yet, the problem of Naxalism is like a Frankenstein monster, it rises out of ashes every time.

Kidnappings have to be viewed as an extension of activities of political groups who believe in 'revolutionary' and 'terroristic' acts to promote their cause and achieve their ends. Perhaps their approach to public life emanates from their strong belief that political institutions are totally inadequate for the exercise of democratic rights. The immediate objectives of organised violence on their part are general : intimidate the adversary, neutralise onlookers, and consolidate their base and following, while kidnapping people and keeping them as hostages is a bargaining weapon either for ransom or to secure the release of their convicted 'comrades', undertrials, and those in custody. The next phase of this on-slaught will be to intimidate the judicial personnel which will create additional problems. Public policy towards Naxalism did not yield the desired result.

Naxalism has become more resilient inspite of police measures, it is demanding and tending to secure respectability and recognition as a movement. The movement seems to remain eternally young.

Naxalism as a philosophy is attracting attention from the thinking sections of the population; its growth will have an adverse impact on all the political parties.

Most of the Naxals, whichever group they belong to, have a genuine urge to serve the people, improve the lot of the poor, and do justice to the weak and down-trodden. Like in any other section of the society there are a few selfish and morally weak persons among the Naxals too. Swindling of money, womanising and liquor are their weaknesses.

The philosophy of power through the barrel of the gun is slowly percolating into different strata of the rural society. Though the people in general are ignoring the call of the Naxals to boycott the elections, their exercise of the right of franchise seems to be mechanical now and their enthusiasm in the election process is gradually fading.

The slogan of Vinoba's movement was "wealth and land shall be distributed. The hungry will no longer tolerate it". It had created enough ground for idealism and created a climate to bring to an end oppressive rural society in the country. But it failed to achieve the objective.

## **National Perspectives**

Certain national perspectives emerged from the deliberations, in regard to (a) the benevolent and malignant facets of political process, (b) place of democratic dissent and civil liberties, and (c) public policy process.

### **Political Process**

Politicians have to recognize that preservation of democratic polity is a vital task and that political bankruptcy has to be arrested in tackling national problems like Naxalism. There is no short-cut to power.

Naxals are dedicated in their fight against corruption and injustice; they have to be drawn into the mainstream of democratic politics. Unfortunately, the attempts of some Naxals were thwarted by the 'established' political parties, when they wanted to contest the elections in 1989.

In order to cleanse the democratic process, people should have the right to reject any or all the candidates in an election through radical electoral reform. Legislation alone doesn't result in development; social forces are needed to bring about social change.

### **Democratic dissent and civil liberties**

Democracy has to accommodate dissent. Even if more policemen lost their lives than Naxals, that does not justify police excesses, and indiscriminate and unrestrained state terrorism. On the other hand, can everyone having grievances against state take law into his hands, and to arms? Democracy has to accommodate dissent and, civil liberties can't be given to those who do not want to play the game of democracy. Civil liberties groups should also condemn the violence of Naxals.

These contradictions and conflicts of democracy can be resolved not by the contending parties through violent methods but only through



democratic political processes. Political activities involving violence will not be possible without local support or fear and apathy among the populace. The extent of local support need not be large in an environment of intimidation and apathy. Small criminal gangs flourish in such an atmosphere.

The search for the source of support need not go very far. The base lies in genuine or imagined grievances and injustices perceived by sections of population which provides shelter for the activists. Such grievances and injustices could be of general nature against the system, against the government in general, and police and judiciary in particular, or specific to certain classes of the society. Anger as a prelude to violence and terrorism may be more against the lethargic receptivity of the public institutions and sometimes hostile processes of handling of the grievances and injustices.

Limited police accountability to the community, protracted judicial proceedings exacerbate the explosive nature of the situation, whether it be criminal, civil or political. Alongside, relatively easy access to weapons makes violence attractive, tempting and paying especially with the increasing politicisation of administration and police.

### **Public Policy Process**

Public Policy Process gets distorted when subjected to partisan political factors. Policy process calls for clarity of vision. With regard to tribals, Jawaharlal Nehru envisioned the objectives of national policy in terms of protecting the distinct identity of tribal culture and providing them the benefits of planned development. Inadequate commitment to the vision, partisan political process, and inadequate complementarity among the legislative, executive and judicial instrumentalities of State have contributed to the problems such as exploitation of the tribals and their alienation. Release of undertrials, provision of special development fund and other such measures are appropriate but not adequate. The crystallization of issues, and exploration of options have to be resolved not by segregated actions, but through aggregated policy process and firm follow-up action.

### **Towards An Action Plan**

Several observations have been made in terms of action needed in order to solve the problem, not only of Naxalism but also the root causes that germinated Naxalism. They can be categorized as referring to (a) the premises of the problems, methods of solution and the will to

act and (b) long-term and short-term covering the immediate and directly related approaches to the problem.

### **The Premises**

Naxalism is a political ideology, it is a national issue. It has to be resolved at the political plane, through consensus. It goes beyond the boundary lines of police action.

An open door policy is a welcome approach; it calls for bringing all the concerned including all the major Naxal groups, to the conference table.

Democratic process in an open society, howsoever, those calling themselves radical may deride it, is the strongest bulwark against instability and spread of violent forces.

Naxalism has attracted many a seminar, conference and legislative debate, the problems at the grass-root have remained. Time is of essence in solving this problem, before it spreads and develops stronger roots.

Political problems have to be solved through political solutions. Socio-economic problems have to have socio-economic responses. Political violence should establish the irrelevance of draconian laws enacted to fight terrorism. Naxalism has no exclusive law and order solution.

In the ultimate analysis the root of civil turbulence and violence can be traced to the deprivations of large sections of the society and lack of opportunities for the development of individuals, while at the same time and in the same milieu, a minority enjoys the power and resources that provide them easy access to their disproportionate advancement and indulgence in visible vulgarities. To expect others not to notice these inequities and cultivate resentment is not only inhuman but also unethical.

Play-acting for electoral games by the leading political parties in the country will not persuade the effected to look forward to a better life in the coming years. It is within the powers of the governments to formulate and implement policies without delay which will not only generate hope but also prospects for realizations in not too distant a future.

It is not that we have not been aware of these problems, even if our familiarity was confined to only a few of their dimensions. The political process, if at all moved to correct them, has been moving at a

snail's pace, while with increasing awareness on the part of the population the social turbulence has been increasing. And not being able to face the turbulence in a judicious and rational manner, political parties and governments sought containing the turbulent forces with repressive laws on the one hand and politicising administration, police, and justice on the other. These measures instead of containing, promoted further violence. Let us eliminate Naxalism, not Naxals.

It should be recognised without any qualifications that the responsibility to initiate measures rests exclusively with the governments.

### **Long-term**

Naxalism should be tackled on the social, economic and political fronts with the cooperation and involvement of governmental agencies and the different segments of the society, so that the root cause namely, social and economic injustice prevalent in different parts of the country especially in certain backward rural and tribal areas are removed and those who are actively involved in this movement are brought back to the mainstream of national life and their energies utilised for the upliftment of the down-trodden and the oppressed through constructive programmes in a peaceful manner.

Naxalism has to be treated as a national problem, by involving all the political parties in order to review and formulate policies and oversee their implementation on a non-partisan basis.

One of the necessary conditions to promote the integrity of persons involved in all branches of administration, particularly police is to totally depoliticise it. Appointments, postings, transfers, promotions, etc. should be institutionalised, away from the purview of political entities. This will help them in expressing their positions on various problems unequivocally. And more important, the incentive for politically motivated measures like harassment, foisting of unwarranted criminal and civil cases will get reduced. Naturally this calls for the willingness of the political masters to exercise restraint on their 'political' powers.

Effective implementation of programmes call for proper orientation on the part of officials especially the police who at the cutting-edge level do not have a proper perspective of Naxalism or state policy.

Participation of people through decentralized institutions of local self-government - Panchayat Raj, Cooperatives, Gram Nyayalayas; - not only improves the quality of democracy which is the job of every citizen, but will also contribute to the pace of democratic development process.

Along with the statutory organisations, it is necessary to strengthen the traditional social institutions in villages which reflect the social and cultural life of people.

Mere legislation on the Statute Books is no guarantee for the improvement and betterment of the deprived. Judiciary has to devise ways and means of reaching the tribals and delivering them justice rather than expect the tribals to go to the courts of law. Machinery for quick dispensation of justice at the village level will have to be created at the earliest. Whether legal status could be given to the Grama Sabhas or will it be necessary to create a unified criminal justice system in the tribal areas may be considered.

We have to create institutions and processes at various levels starting from the police station and equivalent levels of administration and upwards which can almost continuously monitor the activities of the law enforcing agencies, especially in the context of people exercising their political rights. Development of tribal leadership is a critical variable in promoting participative and a decentralised process.

Modification has to be brought in the process of power - that is the electoral process. It has to be a complete shake-up of the electoral process which has an in-built mechanism to express the anger, frustration and alienation of the people against the system as well as the political actors in all the political parties, what may be called a negative vote.

The provision and exercise of Negative or Rejection Vote will generate a moral and ethical movement which will transform the climate of the polity. The continuous exercise of these votes periodically would create a moral force in the society, and a continuous debate will start between the political leadership and the people on the one side and various interest-groups on the other.

The combination of the revolutionary processes of rejection or negative voting plus the need to get majority of votes will initiate political processes which will lead to changing the character of politics.

Voluntary social organisations and social scientists wedded to the upliftment of weaker sections, should educate them about the need to enter the election fray by which the Naxals can get into the mainstream of democratic politics.

Government should not stop half way the implementation of the announced policy of liberalisation towards Naxals. This includes withdrawal of conspiracy cases against writers and giving up efforts to

frame new charges on the persons who were or are being set free by the courts.

The whole gamut of outdated rules, regulations, manuals, training, etc., guiding the activities of law enforcing agencies have to be revised to suit the changed conditions. Both these measures should reduce the scope for politically inspired 'law enforcement' measures. Corruption among administrators should be dealt with severely, beyond transfers and suspensions.

Where there is sufficient understanding of the problem, immediate action should be taken. Some of these should include: the most important and urgent thing is to establish the credibility, integrity and accountability of law enforcing agencies, especially the police. The accountability has to cover, among other things, arrests, detention, interrogation, encounters, deaths in custody and encounter and their use of authority to keep peace and order including at a time when sections of populations are exercising their political and civil rights.

Both the government and the champions of civil liberties should initiate prompt action to restore civil order across the country where individuals and groups can exercise their liberties unintimidated and unchallenged.

Media should be effectively used to communicate steps taken by government to deal with the problems. Similarly folk art forms may be fully utilised to impress upon the people the dangers of the philosophy of power through the barrel of the gun.

Gandhian concept of 'Ahimsa' will have to be popularised with the help of surviving veterans of the freedom struggle. And media spread of the philosophy of violence through films will have to be contained by amending or even by reframing the censor rules.

A special cell for exchange of information on this subject and coordination may be created in each of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra.

The unemployed and employable educated youth, if remain idle, become the potential cadre of the Naxalite Movement. Therefore our education system right from the secondary to the university level need to be made skill and job-oriented.

Research and development cells may be created in the universities and other academic institutions to go into the village level problems including poverty, land alienation and attitudes which resist the innovative

changes in agriculture, social forestry and other allied rural reconstruction activities. These research cells or units should convey their findings to the policy-makers, administrators and voluntary agencies to take up suitable programmes for poverty alleviation.

### **Short-term**

Short-term measures are known, as clear as day-light.

Land reforms, setting up of Land Tribunals for quick settlement of land disputes and restoration of alienated lands to tribals, ameliorative measures like employment generation, translation into reality the minimum wage legislations and norms, periodical revision of minimum wages, debt relief (without seepages through corruption), supply of essential commodities at subsidised rates, provision of medical and educational facilities, abolition of forest contractors system and adequate price for forest produce through tribal cooperatives, and a humane approach demand priority.

Abolition of bonded labour, formation of labour contract societies, recruitment of tribals in government service including police and other para-military services, development of forest and mineral based industries with guaranteed employment to the tribals, special schemes for drop-out students, checking money lending and easy credit facilities with regulated interest rate constitute the second set of short-term action plan.

In view of the specialised nature of the schemes, officers should be posted and transferred after careful consideration but not frequently and indiscriminately. Working hours of government office may be adjusted to suit the convenience of citizens. Incentives may be continued to those who want to surrender their arms and offer to live like any other citizens. A committee of officials and non-officials may be constituted to oversee implementation of promises made by the government, previous as well as the present. A Committee of Government officials, public representatives and party workers may be constituted to oversee promises made by the government, previous as well as the present, and implementation of land reforms, village development programmes and relief measures. Simultaneously, in order to create a favourable atmosphere, government should agree to an impartial agency to look into the deaths, convictions, trials, detention of persons on the basis of inadequate or fake evidence.

In order to improve the image, efficacy and free and fair functioning of the police; and free the political parties of the charge that police is being misused, police organization may be given functional autonomy by the setting up of a State Security Committee on lines recommended by the National Police Commission. It may be made accountable to the legislature.

# **Naxalism – Fact, Fiction and Future**

**\* – S. Subramanian**

Conceptual clarity is sine qua non for arriving at valid conclusions and viable policy options, while dealing with a complex socio-economic problem like Tribal Backwardness. One should avoid the temptation of equating the symptoms of the deep-rooted malady with the manifestation of parasitical infestation. The treatment for the malady and clearing of the parasitical infection are distinct and separate.

In this context, it is worthwhile to ponder whether amelioration of the conditions of Tribal poor would cause the disappearance of Naxalism from political scene automatically, or conversely, assisting the growth of Naxalism would ensure the removal of Tribal poverty. The answer is in the negative as both are not interrelated.

Naxalism is a political ideology and it is not a socio-economic movement aimed at the betterment of Tribal poor.

The social and economic backwardness of Tribal poor and their geographical location provides a 'classic situation' for Naxals to test out their ideological tactics of guerilla warfare, People's War and Rural based Revolution. Assuming that the Tribals' lot improves, Naxals would simply shift their scene of operations to where 'exploited classes' exist and geographical conditions are conducive to guerilla war. The 'target areas' are not difficult to be identified and named but one would not like to spare the Naxals the efforts of original thinking.

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## Fact

Naxalism is a brand name. Communist ideology of Marxist-Leninist variety, burst out on the Indian scene as a radical romantic, revolutionary political creed in Spring of 1967. Debunking Parliamentary Democracy and swearing by the tenet that the political power flows through the barrel of the gun, openly swearing allegiance to Chairman Mao, a well thought out political strategy had a premature birth in West Bengal in the ideal conditions of chaos that prevailed after the fall of the unpopular Congress Ministry. Euphoric at their unexpected success, the new United Front, in its proclaimed policy statement of March 1, 1967, assured support to all downtrodden people in their legitimate struggles to ameliorate their conditions. Police were asked not to interfere in 'class actions'.

Marxist-Leninists chose the Siliguri areas for launching their revolution. It was not an accident that Siliguri area was chosen. The area was close to Nepal, Bangladesh, Sikkim (then a protectorate and not part of the Indian Union) and Tibet was just less than 100 miles away. Populated by over 1.25 lakh tribals in a compact area of about 250 sq. miles, the area was a classic illustration of exploitation by landlords, money-lenders and others, and there was simmering discontent. Tribals had risen in revolt in the past from this area in 1939 and 1959, and the Kisan Sabhas were energised by activists. Police were rendered ineffective by political directives and violence as a means of social and economic change was put into operation with gusto. The 'Spring Thunder' broke over India and the Communist Party of China hailed these developments as the 'front paw of the revolution'.

As Naxalbari movement started showing signs of success and was being replicated in other parts of the country, even an indulgent West Bengal Government had to crack the whip and control the damage. But it was too late. Sporadic revolts of downtrodden broke out in violent form in many parts of the country. Exulting at the spread of the message of revolution, a Coordinating Committee and later a party was formed to synchronise and coordinate localised violent struggles into a Mass Movement. As the struggle cannot be taken to higher levels without revolutionary zeal, discipline and spirit of self sacrifice, political indoctrination of the proletariat become necessary. Naxalism was accepted as the brand name for CPML.

The basic ideology of Naxals consist of :

- Complete rejection of the ethics of Parliamentary Democracy.
- Emphasis on uncompromising class war.

- Political power can be won only through violence-political power flows through the barrel of the gun.

The tactics consist of :-

- Harass, weaken and vanquish the enemy (here the established authority), thereby create 'liberated areas' as an inspiring prelude to the people's war of liberation.
- Four point plan of action for guerilla struggle :
  - Set up liberated zones
  - Build up Peoples Army from the core of Guerillas
  - Encircle the cities from country side
  - 'Kill one and frighten thousands' - the theory of annihilation of class enemies.

The real aim of Naxalites is neither the domain of economics nor social welfare. It is a political movement having its goal as the seizure of political power i.e. State power. Agrarian uprisings with the help of landless peasants and poor tribal people using guerilla warfare tactics have their ultimate aim in capturing state power and then establishing a totalitarian regime. Charu Mazumdar has summed up nicely in his 'annual report' of Naxalbari Movement.

"Militant struggles must be carried on not for land, crops, etc. but for the seizure of State power".

The basic doctrines of guerilla warfare avoid the strength of the enemy and strike at his weak point; hide and seek the enemy; appear as good samaritan to the poor masses by robbing Paul to pay the poor Peter; gain credibility by executing hated enemies of the poor etc. etc. are fully practised by the Naxals.

One can go on endlessly expatiating on the various facets of guerilla warfare and people's revolution. Some are tempted to view the splits that periodically occur in this movement as signs of decay. It is not so. The splits are basically on interpretation of basic formulations of ideology and on the tactics to be adopted to hasten the revolution. Splits can be likened to the moulting of a cobra which always emerges brighter and fitter after shedding the skin.

Thus the fact remains that Naxalites subscribe to the cult of violence as a means of social, economic and political change and do not believe in the system of Parliamentary Democracy.

### **Fiction**

It is figment of imagination to describe Naxalism as a label for downtrodden agrarian and tribal poor. Equally so is to describe the tribals living in the contiguous forest areas of Orissa, A.P., M.P. and Maharashtra as a Homogeneous Tribal Society. Thirdly, to say that Naxalism is a problem existing coterminous with the Homogeneous Tribal Society.

The fact is Naxalism exists as a political ideology beyond the tribal belt. The many front organisations of Naxalites among students, workers intellectuals, etc., would belie the fact that Naxals is only a tribal movement. Naxalism exists in tribal areas because: (1) Existence of discontentment; (2) forest area suitable for guerilla tactics and (3) inaccessibility of these areas to the enemy - the State power and (4) non-existence of worthwhile administrative machinery in the tribal areas.

Another fiction circulating among well meaning people is that administrative process is the cause for Naxalism as it is anti- tribal and non-responsive to the needs of tribals. There may be inadequacies, lack of involvement and dedication on the part of administrative machinery but to say that nothing was done for the tribals by the administration is far from the truth.

By the same token, the description of police as abettors to exploitation of tribals by vested interests and feudal elements is a fiction. Police are a law enforcement agency. The law prescribes specifying the areas where police can act. Murder, Arson, Loot, extortion, kidnapping, sabotage are prescribed by law. Once they are committed, the police are to step in. Extenuating circumstances, if any, can be taken notice of only by the Judicial fora. If a harassed debtor uses violence against a usurious money lender and causes him serious injuries, police have to take action against the perpetrator of violence. The cause for the same can be adjudged as just or otherwise only by a court of law. Effective and efficient law enforcement would appear to the uninitiated as Police siding with the 'haves' and against 'have nots'. Law is always reactive and seldom proactive. Police have to enforce the law as it stands on the statute book. It is not their's to reason why.

In a guerilla war situation, where new personnel of the forces of law and order operate, certain excesses are bound to happen. One

cannot in a situation discern between a friend and a foe. Where it is a question of life and death, the one who pulls the trigger faster survives. As a trained force, perhaps in such situation, police come out more successful. It is quite likely that in such situations innocent persons also get killed. There are provisions in the law and administrative procedure to determine whether such deaths were justified and were not the results of premeditative malice. No one can support fake encounter deaths. They are required to be put down by an iron hand.

Two wrongs cannot make one right. Naxalite killings cannot be an excuse for fake encounter and police excesses. Conversely, alleged police excesses cannot be the rationale to support Naxalite violence.

In the past two years alone, in A.P., there have been 26 murders, 98 other offences and 28 kidnappings involving Naxals in ten districts. In 1990 alone, there have been 20 murders, one dacoity and 84 other offences. These figures exclude non-Naxalite crime. The administration cannot but step in as they are under law enjoined upon to prevent and detect crime and to maintain order and security.

While there are well meaning people to articulate vociferously against state terrorism and police excesses, one is surprised to find these elements mute when it comes to the question of excesses and crime by Naxals. Why this double standard? Is it fear psychosis of possible reprisals by Naxals or a tacit approval of Naxalite ideology. In this context, one finds a demand against removal of Armed Outpost from Naxalite infested areas. Why? Is it because of the excesses of the Police? If it were so, one would demand closer supervision and scrutiny of the acts of Police. One can understand the affected party, the Naxalites, demanding the removal of Armed Outposts, as the presence of the latter, prevent their activities. But one is at a loss to know why law-abiding citizens and intellectuals clamour for this.

## **Future**

Tribal development has lagged behind by many decades and steps are to be taken to render justice to them swiftly and efficiently. Unless this is done, conditions in tribal areas would be available for any violent groups to exploit.

Following may be implemented with utmost expedition :—

- Elimination of Benami holdings in Tribal areas.
- Assignment of surplus land to landless poor.

- Ensuring payment of remuneration and uniform wages to the tribals.
- Periodical revision of Minimum Wages.
- Supply of essential commodities required by Tribals at subsidised rates.
- Tribals to be allowed to collect, sell and utilise minor forest produce. This right should be well publicised among tribals.
- Abolition of Bonded Labour.
- Provision of (1) drinking water (2) medical (3) educational and (4) irrigational facilities.
- Easy credit facilities. Elimination of money lenders.
- Establishment of a specially structured GIRIJAN Organisation which can function multi-dimensionally and initiate all pro- developmental activities under one roof. Plethora of organisations/Corporations only confuse the tribals.
- Imparting training in simple skills to the tribal youth to enable them to play a useful role in their community.
- Creation of a unified Criminal Justice System in the Tribal areas to render instant justice to the community.

### **Major Thrust Areas**

In addition,

- Land Tribunals in tribal areas to settle land disputes quickly.
- Speedy and quick disposal of litigation - Nyaya Adalats
- Allotment of Arrack outlets to tribal co-operatives.
- Posting of specially trained, development oriented officers in the Tribal areas.
- Improvement of Communication : All weather - Roads, Wireless, telephone facilities, postal facilities.
- Special T.V. and Radio Programmes in Tribal dialects to educate the tribals.
- Forest contractor system to be abolished. Contracts should be given only to tribal cooperatives.

## **Police Activities**

- Order and security are pre-requisites for economic development. Hence police presence in Tribal areas is not only necessary but to be strengthened.
- Instead of increasing armed police, specially trained civil police personnel should be posted in Tribal hamlets/villages to assist the tribals in their developmental activities and to prevent their exploitation by outsiders. The activities of police in tribal areas are to be closely monitored to prevent abuses.
- Large number of tribal youth are to be inducted into police service. Their training should be specially catered to developmental activities in Tribal area. They should function as catalysts for change.
- All past charges levelled against Police are to be enquired by a Judge of the High Court and excesses coming to notice to be punished as per law.

## **Naxals**

In response to the appeal made by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in June'90, so far over 300 naxals have come over ground and surrendered and are being rehabilitated. We should do all that is possible to bring the Naxals back to the main stream of political life in the country.

However, it should be borne in mind, that Naxals periodically give a call for suspension of armed struggle only to get respite and to intensify the violent activities later. The tendency in these appeals to return to democracy is directly proportionate to the 'success' of the 'enemy' (State power) in containing their activities.

If there is a genuine change of mind, Naxals should be welcomed with open hands to enter the main stream of life. But if it is only a ploy to halt governmental activities, the bluff should be dealt with squarely.

One would like to modify the Napoleon dictum "Trust in God and keep your powder dry" to read 'Trust in Naxals but do not let down your guard'.

We are part of the recent history to put aside our impressions and perceptions. One only hopes that reason will dawn on Naxals and make them enter the main stream. If only the Leopard changes its spots and gives up violence, it would become an adorable pet with considerable potential for the future of the country.

## Conclusion

The choice before us is clear. Do we concentrate on the socio-economic development of tribals and create conditions favourable for such activities? Or fritter away our energies in exposing the cause of a political group which scorn the very basis of our existence - Parliamentary Democracy. Let not the future judge us harshly that we neglected the needy and pampered the wily.

# Kidnapping and Political Violence

\* — Balwanth Reddy

Recent political kidnapping of people in the State and elsewhere in the country call for an understanding of the underlying problems and appropriate solution to prevent the State and the country drifting into Lebanon-Latin American type of situation.

These kidnappings have to be viewed as an extension of activities of political groups who believe in 'revolutionary' and 'terroristic' acts to promote their cause and achieve their ends. Perhaps their approach to public life emanates from their strong belief that political institutions are totally inadequate for the exercise of democratic rights. The immediate objectives of organised violence on their part are general: intimidate the adversary, neutralise 'onlookers' and consolidate their base and following, while kidnapping people and keeping them as hostages is a bargaining weapon either for ransom or as it has been the case the release of their convicted 'comrades', undertrials, and those in custody. It is quite likely that many of these are victims of draconian laws which the Centre and the States have enacted to combat terrorism and revolutionary activity. The next phase of this onslaught will be to intimidate the judicial personnel which will create additional problems.

It must be recognised that kidnapping, holding persons for ransom, intimidating law enforcing officials and judiciary can be resorted to by the professional criminals as much as revolutionary political activists. In fact at some level, and at some state, the distinction between the two may get blurred and 'crime' can easily acquire political hue. Once this happens, the deterioration in law and order will not only be a threat to the proper functioning of civil society but the exercise of civil liberties in the face of consequential state and non-state violence will be in jeopardy.

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It is for these reasons that both the government and the champions of civil liberties should initiate prompt action to restore civil order across the country where individuals and groups can exercise their liberties unintimidated and unchallenged.

Any action without understanding and appreciating the root causes of the present situation will be unrewarding and futile. It should also be recognised that all the underlying causes cannot be removed or eliminated overnight. But seriousness of intent on the part of the involved and the concerned, particularly the government and the leading political parties, will go a long way in removing the threats to functioning of civil society and civil liberties.

The political activities involving violence generally will not be possible without local support and general fear and apathy among the populace. The extent of local support need not be large in an environment of intimidation and apathy. Small criminal gangs flourish in such an atmosphere. The search for the source of support need not go very far. The base lies in genuine or imagined grievances and injustices perceived by sections of population which provide the shelter for the activists. Such grievances and injustices could be of general nature against the system, or specific to certain classes of the society or the government in general, and police and judiciary in particular. Anger as a prelude to violence and terrorism may be more against the lethargic receptivity of the public institutions and against the liesurely and sometimes hostile processes of handling of the grievances and injustices. Limited police accountability to the community, delayed and protracted so-called judicial proceeding exacerbate the explosive nature of the situation, whether it be criminal, civil or political. Along side, relatively easy access to weapons make violence attractive, tempting, and paying especially with the increasing politicising of administration and police.

It is not that we have not been aware of these problems, even if our familiarity was confined to only a few of their dimensions. The politics if at all moved to correct them, has been moving at a snail's pace, while with increasing awareness on the part of the population the social turbulence has been increasing. And not being able to face the turbulence in a judicious and rational manner, political parties and governments sought containing the turbulent forces with repressive laws and politicising administration, police, and justice. These measures instead of containing, promoted further violence.

Some of the grievances do not have short term solutions. But sectional, partisan, and biased redressal turns out to be a major source

of accentuating the tensions within the society. Some of the problems, but not all, may need detailed study. Appointment of fresh commissions and committees can be viewed as yet another delaying device. Where there is sufficient understanding of the problem, immediate action should be taken. Some of these should include:

The most important and urgent thing at this stage is to establish the credibility, integrity and accountability of law enforcing agencies, especially the police. The accountability has to cover, among other things, arrests, detention, interrogation, encounters, deaths in custody and encounter and their use of authority to keep peace and order including at a time when sections of population are exercising their political and civil rights, the present system of accountability within the hierarchy of police and administration leading eventually to the political authority, legislature and judiciary is woefully inadequate, time consuming and irresponsible. We have to create institutions and processes at various levels starting from the police station and equivalent levels of administration and upwards which can almost continuously monitor the activities of the law enforcing agencies, especially in the context of people exercising their political rights. In addition, the whole gamut of outdated rules, regulations, manuals, training, etc., guiding the activities of law enforcing agencies have to be revised to suit the changed conditions. Both these measures should reduce the scope for politically inspired 'law enforcement' measures. These steps, together with the consequential 'openness' do not require any elaborate enquiry and prompt action in this regard, should pave the way for restoring where necessary and reinforcing the belief in the working of the democratic institutions in the country.

The second most important related steps concern the judicial and quasi-judicial machinery at various levels covering criminal, civil, and economic litigation. Mere legislation on the Statute Books is no guarantee for the improvement and betterment of the deprived. Easy, inexpensive and prompt access to judicial and quasi-judicial machinery for the redressal of complaints, and humane processes of quick disposal of cases are essential ingredients which will go a long way in restoring trust in these processes. The government can straightway take many meaningful initiatives in this area.

One of the necessary conditions to promote the integrity of persons involved in all branches of administration, particularly police is to totally depoliticise it. Appointments, postings, transfers, promotions, etc. should be institutionalised, away from the purview of political entities. This will help them in expressing their positions on various problems

unequivocally. The intelligence work instead of serving various political ends will address itself to more important and urgent issues of the day. And more important, the incentive for politically motivated measures like harassment, foisting of unwarranted criminal and civil cases will be reduced. Naturally this calls for not so much a study in depth but the willingness of the political masters to exercise restraint on their 'political' powers.

In the ultimate analysis the roots of civil turbulence and violence can be traced to the deprivations of large sections of the society and lack of opportunities for the development of individuals while at the same time and in the same milieu, a minority enjoys the power and resources that provide them easy access to their disproportionate advancement and indulgence in visible vulgarities. To expect the others not to notice these inequities and cultivate resentment is not only in-human but also unethical. Play acting for electoral games by the leading political parties in the country will not persuade the effected to look forward to a better life in the coming years. Agreed that no miracles are possible in these realms. But it is within the powers of the governments to formulate and implement policies without delay which will not only generate hope but also prospects for realisation in not too distant a future. Educational opportunities and opportunities to acquire requisite skills is a simple illustration where instead of indulging in fancy exercises, the government can within a short period saturate the young with education and skills needed which with minimal other institutional support should put them on a path of comparatively better life.

Virtual failure on most of these fronts by the public authorities together with increasingly easy access to weapons of various types makes violent political activities attractive. The need alongside other unauthorised possession. Eventually we should aim at a structure of society where the need for even authorised possession of arms will be minimal. A proper understanding of the sources of political violence should establish the irrelevance of draconian laws enacted to fight terrorism. Apart from their being authoritarian, arbitrary and undemocratic, they have neither deterred the terrorists nor the situation in the country has improved. Therefore, the sooner these repressive laws are withdrawn the better it will be for the healthy growth of political actions.

It should be recognised without any qualifications that the responsibility to initiate measures along the lines suggested rests exclusively with the governments. But the governments 'immediate concern seem to be how to handle kidnapping, abduction, etc. that are

taking place behind the cover of political agitation. More specifically the present dilemma is whether the government bargain with the abductors and kidnappers? Related questions one has to ask is: "Will the activities end with the current bargains?", and eventually where all this kind of 'trading' will lead to? We have already answered these questions. In the light of all this, a meaningful and sensible alternative is to make at best "a last bargain". This in essence means, the political elements who are wedded to 'armed' activities to promote their cause, give up their commitment to armed action as a political weapon, especially in view of the measures and policies which we want the government to initiate and implement. Once they withdraw from this commitment and therefore surrender all the weapons in their possession, a general amnesty that should enable all of them work openly in a democratic framework, should be possible. Simultaneously, in order to create a favourable atmosphere, the government should agree to an impartial agency to look into the deaths, convictions, trials, detention of persons on the basis of inadequate or fake evidence.

All these issues apart, I wish to assert that no individual or a party has under any pretext or any circumstances the right to deny civil and political liberties to a fellow citizen. Such acts of brigandism should be unequivocally condemned. This should be the unqualified position of all organisations and individuals who champion the cause of civil liberties in the country.



# Naxalism in Andhra Pradesh

\* – Potturi Venkateswara Rao

## The Problem and its Dimensions

The state government's policy towards Naxals did not yield the desired results whichever party was in power, and whosoever was the Chief Minister during the last two decades. The problem was growing in all dimensions.

The police in the state are not equipped to fight guerillas, armed with AK 47s and other sophisticated weapons. They have no idea of the political convictions and military strategies of the extremists. While Naxals are popular among the poorer sections of the rural society, police suffer from an impaired and damaged image of themselves.

No political party has ever made any sincere effort to present itself before the people as a better political force than Naxals in finding quick solutions to the problems of the people. This political vacuum made the job of Naxals easier.

There continues to be a wide gulf between the socio-economic conditions of the rural masses and urban people. The conventional approach, namely development process through successive five year plans resulted in an unbalanced growth. While the rich became richer very fast even in the rural areas, there has not been a commensurate improvement in the conditions of the poor. More and more people from the artisan sections of the rural society are looking towards or shifting to urban areas for livelihood with an assured income. Litigation has retarded the implementation of land reforms. Small farmers migrated to the soil-rich tribal lands and occupied vast tracts. The tribals continue to live in sub-human conditions.

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Dispensation of Justice has become very costly. No poor man can afford to go to a court for redressal of his grievances or settlement of small disputes particularly of land. The rich land lords with their political clout tend to dominate the dumb poor denying them of natural justice. The poorer sections of the rural society are, in the circumstances naturally attracted towards Naxals for easy, quick and expenseless justice.

During the seventies and the eighties the cult of violence gained more and more respectability and recognition. The films played major role in this. From "Sholay" in Hindi to "Siva" in Telugu, films with the themes of vengeance and violence have knowingly or unknowingly down-graded the police, the judiciary and the politicians. Illiterate masses now seem to be almost convinced that unless they resort to violence their problems will not be solved. They fear police but have no respect for them. They have no faith in the judiciary. Politicians as a class are considered power-hungry. Even the elected representatives are looked at with mistrust.

The philosophy of power through the barrel of the gun is slowly percolating into different strata of the rural society. Though the people in general are ignoring the call of the Naxals to boycott the elections, their exercise of the right of franchise seems to be mechanical now and their enthusiasm in the election process is gradually fading.

Many young men think that they would not get jobs even after completing academic courses. Those among them who have an aptitude to enter politics but have no financial resources to fight elections think that it is easier to enter politics through Naxalism. They, therefore, do not hesitate to give up studies to become Naxals. Though there has been fluctuation in the inflow of cadres into the Naxalite movement, it should be noted that there has never been a break or total stoppage of inflow.

Police find it easier to bump off known Naxals with criminal records than to prove the charges in the court. This is a matter which requires deep study by pundits of law and senior police officers.

In the game of life and death between police and Naxals the loss is always heavy on the side of the latter. But the loss of life on the side of police too has been considerable.

Most of the Naxals, whichever group they belong to have a genuine urge to serve the people, improve the lot of the poor and do justice to the weak and downtrodden. Like in any other section of the society there are a few selfish and morally weak persons among the

Naxals too. Swindling of money, womanising and drinks are their weaknesses.

Some of the policemen at the outposts are rough and rude in their dealings with the general public. Being away from their families for long months they tend to go on the prowl and satisfy their wants. It is only because of such elements the entire force has come to suffer bad reputation in the rural and tribal areas

### **Approach Towards Solution**

- Let not the government stop half way in the process of implementing their announced policy of liberalisation towards Naxals. This includes withdrawal of conspiracy cases against writers and giving up efforts to frame new charges on the persons who were or are being set free by the courts.
- Improve the image of the police and equip them to tackle whatever problems they are entrusted with. Let there be a full-fledged PRO of the rank of not less than a DIG to improve relations between media and the public on one side and the police on the other side. He should work directly under the control of the head of the force.
- A new machinery for quick dispensation of justice at the village level will have to be created at the earliest. Whether legal status could be given to the Grama Sabhas may be considered.
- Spread of the philosophy of violence through films will have to be contained if necessary by amending or even by reframing the censor rules.
- Whatever promises were made by the previous government to the Naxals who surrendered will have to be honoured.
- Incentives may be continued to those who want to surrender their arms and offer to live like any other citizens.
- A committee of officials and non officials may be constituted to oversee implementation of promises made by the government.
- Folk art forms may be fully utilised to impress upon the people the dangers of the philosophy of power through the barrel of the gun. Gandhian concept of "Ahimsa" will have to be popularised with the help of surviving veterans of the freedom struggle. (The intelligence department of the Government of Andhra Pradesh had sometime ago tried to counter the extremist propaganda of violence through the



genre of street drama. It did achieve a certain measure of success but I do not know why it was stopped).

- A special cell for exchange of information (on this subject) and coordination may be created in each of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Maharashtra.
- A perspective plan may be prepared and implemented in all earnestness in the tribal areas. It should cover wide range of issues taken up by the Naxals. The schemes implemented hitherto did not adequately serve the interests of the tribals. Honest officials should be entrusted with the task of implementing the new plan.

# Naxalism : Critical Issues

\* — Prof. N.Y. Reddy

Naxalism can be both a problem and challenge to our society, depending on how we perceive it. It is a problem because we did not bother to minimise the disparities between the rich and poor, the tribals and non-tribals and the rural and urban. Naxalism can be viewed as a challenge because it provides us with an opportunity to probe into the real causes of our socio-economic and emotional disparities by which we can embark on new socio-economic priorities which can lead us to a greater egalitarian society.

How has Naxalism not assumed alarming proportions in States like, West Bengal and Kerala - Where the CPM is in power? Even in our own State, districts like Nalgonda and Khammam where the leftist forces, particularly the CPM are active; the Naxalite activities seem to be less intensive - Why? Perhaps, one could argue that the leftist parties in these pockets must be championing the cause of poor, particularly the tribals and hence, there is a little scope for the Naxals to spread their net-work.

Alienation and anomie characterise the tribal ethos, because they have not been brought into the mainstream of our society even after 43 years of independence. SCs on the other hand are gradually getting integrated into the socio-economic and political process of our society and ideology.

If exploitation could be a value for the feudal and capitalist, why not violent protest including killings can be the value of champions of the poor? The moral of this logic is to minimise the exploitation so that we can also minimise the violence on the part of the Naxals.

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5. The revolutionary concepts like 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' introduced by Gorbachev have taken the entire communist block including the east European countries by storm, why the naxalite movement steeped in the Maoist ideology of the bullet, instead of ballot, determining the political power of people is still upheld? It only suggests that the leftist movements, particularly Naxalism are not attracted by the international scene and therefore, it is the duty of voluntary social organisations and social scientists who are wedded to the upliftment of weaker sections, to educate them about the need to enter the election fray by which the Naxals can capture the political power in our country by ballot and not bullet.

6. When the State Government which is in power now has adopted an open door policy towards Naxals, why we should not play a role in bringing all the concerned to the conference table and sort out the issues that are standing in the way? A meaningful modus operandi can be worked out by which the injustice committed and perpetrated by the vested interests in our society can be minimised.

7. It is argued that Naxalism in our country has several brands and the most powerful among them People's War Group (P.W.G.) and therefore, it is difficult to initiate dialogue with a single group, lest other groups may turn against the process of normalisation. Is it possible by bringing P.W.G. only to the conference table and leave other groups of Naxals untouched? Alternatively, is it possible to bring all the groups to the gamut of negotiations?

8. Poverty, illiteracy, population explosion, ill-health and political ignorance are believed to be major correlates of class struggle in our society and therefore, it is necessary to embark on a massive developmental drive to minimise them which ultimately may pave way towards containing the forces of strife and division in our society. This of course, can be one of our long term objectives. But we have to think of immediate and short term measures by which we can channelise the Naxal forces into positive rural re-construction programme.

**Participant Profile**

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13. Dr. G. Pandey, Senior Faculty Member, Administrative Staff College of India
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15. Shri S. Prasada Raju, Chairman, Municipal Corporation, Warangal
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17. Shri S. Ramachandra Reddy, Secretary, Telugu Desam Party
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